

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: INITIAL ASSESSMENT PORTUGUESE ELECTIONS: TWO CHEERS FOR
DEMOCRACY

REF: LISBON 2328

1. AS OF EARLY SATURDAY MORNING ABOUT THREE QUARTERS OF THE
VOTES HAVE BEEN COUNTED. BY AND LARGE RURAL AREAS REPORTED
EARLIEST, AND SOME URBAN VOTES ARE STILL TO COME. THEY ARE
NOT EXPECTED TO ALTER THE KNOWN RESULTS SIGNIFICANTLY.

2. IN A MASSIVE, ORDERLY TURNOUT PORTUGUESE VOTERS OPTED
FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM. FIRST FREE ELECTIONS IN ALMOST
HALF A CENTURY SAW SOCIALISTS (38 PERCENT) AND POPULAR
DEMOCRATS (26 PERCENT) SCORE IMPRESSIVELY. SOCIALIST PARTY
RAN STRONGLY IN ALMOST ALL SECTIONS OF COUNTRY. SOCIALIST
VOTE EXCEEDED PARTY'S FONDEST HOPES AND PARTY HAS NOW EMERGED
AS PORTUGAL'S DOMINATE, CIVILIAN POLITICAL FORCE.

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3. COMMUNIST PARTY RAN THIRD (13 PERCENT), SLIGHTLY UNDER EXPECTATIONS. WHILE THEY HARDLY INVESTED MUCH MORAL FERVOR IN FREE ELECTIONS, VOTE NONETHELESS WILL BE DISAPPOINTING TO PARTY WHICH PULLED OUT ALL STOPS TO STIMULATE THE FAITHFUL AND MADE STRONG ORGANIZATIONAL EFFORTS TO BRING THEM TO THE POLLING BOOTH ON ELECTION DAY. COMMUNIST PARTY CAN DRAW SOME SOLACE FROM FACT THAT THEIR VOTE, PLUS THAT OF FELLOW-TRAVELING PARTIES (MDP, FSP, MES AND OTHER SPLINTERS), WILL GO OVER 20 PERCENT.

4. CONSERVATIVES CDS TOOK FOURTH (7 PERCENT), MOSTLY IN THE NORTH, A RESPECTABLE SHOWING IN VIEW OF HARASSMENT TO WHICH PARTY WAS SUBJECTED AND FACT THAT PARTY HARDLY CAMPAIGNED IN MANY PARTS OF COUNTRY.

5. FELLOW-TRAVELING MDP/CDE WAS A DISTANT FIFTH (4 PERCENT), CONFIRMING CRITICISM OF PARTY AS LACKING POPULAR BASE. POOR SHOWING WILL CALL INTO QUESTION PARTY'S RIGHT TO REMAIN IN PRESENT, FOUR-PARTY COALITION--ALONG WITH SOCIALISTS, POPULAR DEMOCRATS AND COMMUNISTS.

6. LEFTIST SPLINTER PARTIES, HEADED BY FSP AND MES, DIVIDED REST OF VOTE (ABOUT 5 PERCENT). BLANK AND VOID BALLOTS RAN ABOUT 7 PERCENT, A LOW FIGURE IN VIEW OF AFM CAMPAIGN IN FAVOR OF BLANK VOTE.

7. TWO KEY QUESTION NOW EMERGE FROM THESE ELCTIONS RESULTS: WHAT CONCLUSIONS WILL THE AFM AND THE RULING REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL DRAW FROM THIS MODERATE VICTORY; HOW FAR AND IN WHAT MANNER WILL THE NON-COMMUNISTS WINNERS PRESS THEIR VICTORY. THE IMMEDIATE OUTLOOK IN OUR VIEW IS FOR A PERIOD OF CAUTIOUS PROBING, AS THE SOCIALISTS AND POPULAR DEMOCRATIS TEST THE MILITARY MOOD AND SEEK TO EMBOLDEN MILITARY MODERATES THROUGH THEIR POPULAR MANDATE. ATTITUDE OF SOARES' SOCIALIST PARTY WILL BE CRITICAL, SINCE IT WILL BE UNDER HEAVY PRESSURE TO MAINTAIN LARGELY-FICTITIOUS "UNITY OF THE LEFT" WITH CUNHAL'S PCP, IN SUPPORT OF THE AFM.

8. WHICH CONCLUSIONS THE AFM DRAWS FROM THE ELECTIONS WILL PROBABLY TURN OUT TO BE THE SINGLE MOST DECISIVE FACTOR OVER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE SHORT TERM. THE RADICAL WING MAY BE TEMPTED TO SEE A DEFEAT FOR THE AFM, WITH ALL THAT IMPLIES, IN A RESULT ABOUT THREE-FOURTHS NON-COMMUNIST. BUT IF IT CHOOSES, THE AFM CAN INTERPRET THE ELECTIONS RESULT AS A VICTORY, INDEED A SWEEPING VICTORY; ALL OF THE TOP PARTIES HAVE SIGNED THE AFM'S "PACT OF UNDERSTANDING" ON THE NEW CONSTITUTION AND ALL OF THE MAJOR PARTIES, EXCEPT FOR THE CDS, ESPOUSE SOME VERSION OF "SOCIALISM". HENCE THE MISSING THIRD CHEER--

WHICH REPRESENTS THE UNKNOWN AFM REACTION.
CARLUCCI

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